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COUNTRY Germany (Soviet Zone)

SUBJECT Situation in the SED  
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1. The definite antagonism between the Semenov group in East Berlin and the Ulbricht group in the SED has deepened, and over the evaluation of the events of the 17 Jun. [redacted] "the Soviets are by no means through with the 17 Jun. They know well enough that the 17 Jun was not the work of 'agents' unless Ulbricht himself might have been behind it."
2. About Ulbricht, whose return to East Berlin is expected about the middle of Nov, it was said: "At first a separation of party offices and government offices and the pulling out of Ulbricht from the government was planned. The separation of party and state offices will go on; among others, the limiting of the new SED chairman of Greater Berlin, Alfred Neumann, to his party office is provided for (Neumann is at present still deputy High Mayor). However in Ulbricht's case nothing will be undertaken for an indefinite time, less on account of the possible damaging effect of this step on general opinion than for internal party reasons. On the Soviet side it is feared such a revision of Ulbricht's powers might shake the structure of the SED, after preservation of party unity has only been achieved with pains." In this connection [redacted] the Zaisser-Herrnstadt group still had its followers in the party, although they are powerless at present.

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3. Significant of the present phase within the party is the ostentatious favoring of Grotewohl by Semenov, who showed an unaccustomedly friendly bearing toward Grotewohl at the public celebration of the 36th anniversary of the October Revolution, repeatedly engaging him in conversation, laughing with him, etc.
4. The prominent emergence into the public eye of Semenov (at a plant meeting in the Kabelwerk Oberspree for the first time) is also regarded as highly significant politically. Semenov is also indefatigably busy behind the screen; for example, he took part with Grotewohl in the conference of cultural workers (Kulturschaffenden) at Dresden on 19 Oct. 53. According to an account of the meeting given by Wilhelm Girnus, the former chief feuilletonist of the SED Central who was dismissed in the Herrnsstadt crisis, the meeting came to recriminations such as he (Girnus) had never lived to see in the course of his whole political career. Girnus himself participated. Girnus indicated as the high point a contribution to the discussion by Semenov, who declared the mission of the writer was to be the fanatic and exponent of the truth, and this the sole principle upon which he should work. Thereupon the writer Stefan Heyn rose up and asked Semenov whether the truth could be told about everything--for example, he might write a book about the 17 Jun, and could he say that it had not been only five percent of the workers? Semenov replied: "Naturally you can write it, but also write that the 17 Jun did not have its beginning on the 16 Jun, but that the 17 Jun belonged to the great proletarian-bourgeois struggle."
5. Another important item in this complex: the Bezirk secretary of a mass organization reported that for some time the regular routine meetings with officials of the High Commission had been very frigid. The Soviet officials had let it appear that they continued to support these organizations only as far as they succeeded in reaching a circle of sympathetic bourgeois who had influence in economic and business life (it did not matter if these men obtained membership).
6. In the course of these new tactics to win men over, the work of the SED in the West and the mass organizations will be separated from the "East work" more sharply than heretofore. There will be a separate West secretaryship, and the entire Western propaganda will be changed. Ebert declared at a meeting: "It no longer makes sense to portray conditions in West Germany as worse than those in the Soviet Zone. The propaganda must adjust itself much more to the West German business boom. The arguments that have been used up to now can no longer be offered Germans."
7. Among other things it is planned to bring out a satirical newspaper in Berlin, something on the order of the "Tarantel". In place of the "Deutschlands Stimme" and "Friedenspost" there will be an illustrated weekly paper which will take its cue in presswork and design from the West German illustrateds. Harald Hauser is the proposed chief editor.
8. In summary, [redacted] the Soviet authorities slowly begin to see the situation in Germany as it really is, and to make themselves independent of the fabricated reports of the SED.

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